

In the news:

The Saratogian

Geyser Road / Route 50 improvements eyed

<http://www.saratogian.com/general-news/20140210/geyser-road-route-50-improvement-eyed>

Saratoga Spa State Park chock full of February activities

<http://www.saratogian.com/general-news/20140210/saratoga-spa-state-park-chock-full-of-february-activities>

State gears up to take casino applications

<http://www.saratogian.com/general-news/20140210/state-gears-up-to-take-casino-applications>

The Daily Gazette

Sheriff's campaign manager in line for County Job

A public relations professional who managed Michael Zurlo's successful campaign last year for Saratoga County sheriff is in line to become the county's new emergency services director. Carl Zeilman of Ballston Lake has also been a longtime volunteer firefighter. He is currently a member of the Round Lake Hose Company, and was previously a firefighter in Colonie. Zeilman's appointment as emergency services director was recommended last week by the Board of Supervisors' Personnel and Insurance Committee. If the appointment is approved by the full board later this month, he will succeed Paul Lent as emergency services director. Everyone on the Personnel Committee is Republican, as is Zurlo. The county board is also overwhelmingly Republican, though the Personnel Committee chairwoman said Zeilman was selected on merit. "Basically, Carl has a tremendous background in firefighting and emergency services," said Personnel Committee Chairwoman Anita M. Daly, R-Clifton Park. Zeilman is currently director of communications for the Associated General Contractors of New York State, and public affairs officer for the United States Navy Reserve. Last fall, he managed Zurlo's successful campaign to be elected the county's first new sheriff in 41 years.

Zeilman declined to comment on Monday pending his final appointment by the Board of Supervisors. Zurlo also declined to comment while the matter is pending before supervisors. The director of emergency services position has been vacant since December, after former director Paul Lent was elected Galway town supervisor. Daly said the county received nine applications and four people were interviewed before Zeilman was selected. She said Zeilman's work on the Zurlo campaign will prove a benefit. "He has been all through Saratoga County and knows the needs of the people, the fire districts and commissioners, and that will be critical going forward for the director of emergency services," Daly said. Zeilman was with the Fuller Road Fire Department in Colonie from 2004 to 2012, holding positions including rescue captain. He was also an Albany County legislator representing the town of Colonie from 2008 to 2011. He has an undergraduate degree in political science from the University at Albany and a master's degree in public health administration from The Sage Colleges Graduate School. He will earn the base salary for emergency services director, which is \$67,964 annually, according to the county Personnel Department. The county emergency services director coordinates the county's response to emergency situations, including flooding and other natural disasters, and often acts as a media spokesperson during incidents. The office oversees the radio communications system used by police, fire and emergency medical personnel. It also manages the county's 911 address data base.

County IDA puts money toward traffic light work

The Saratoga County Industrial Development Agency will put up \$40,000 toward replacing the traffic lights and installing new crosswalks where Geyser Road meets Route 50 next to the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. The IDA agreed Monday to provide the money as the local share as the city seeks a \$200,000 federal grant for the work at one of Saratoga Springs' gateway intersections.

The new lights would be part of a roughly \$750,000 to \$800,000 project that would also add a left-bound turn lane on Geyser, to address problems caused by high levels of commercial truck traffic.

The City Council voted last month to apply for the \$200,000 through the Capital District Transportation Committee, which controls federal transportation spending in the region. The grant requires a 20 percent local share, but until Monday it wasn't known where the local share would come from. The city has provided staff and other in-kind services to the project, but has not put up any of its own money, said Saratoga Springs Planning and Economic Development Director Brad Birge. The intersection has been identified for years as needing improvements because of the level of truck traffic coming from the Grande Industrial Park on Geyser Road. The IDA in 2012 put up \$44,000 for the traffic study by Greenman-Pedersen Inc. of Albany — now nearing completion — which is recommending the intersection

improvements. Under the proposal, the traffic lights would be upgraded and pedestrian-activated crosswalks would be installed. The area sees high pedestrian activity during SPAC concerts, and could see more if a proposed walking-bicycle trail along Geyser Road is built.

Peter Faith, a vice president with Greenman-Pedersen, said the study will also recommend a left turn lane be built on Geyser, with widening extending back about 800 feet, nearly to the location of the Saratoga Water bottling plant. Previous studies have shown the majority of vehicles going east on Geyser make a left turn onto Route 50, and that can lead to traffic backups at peak hours. Officials indicated they'll need other sources of funding for the turn lane portion of the project. Geyser Road is owned by Saratoga County, while Route 50 is a state highway. "To get to \$750,000, we will need some help from the state, the county and probably the town of Milton, too," said IDA Vice Chairman Richard Dunn. Birge indicated the city is looking for other funding sources, including the owners of the Grande Industrial Park, where two bus garages and a number of trucking-intensive businesses are located. "We're looking for additional state funding and additional funding from the Grande Industrial Park. They have been strong proponents of the project," Birge said. The intersection — where two-lane Geyser Road meets four-lane Route 50 — is at a main gateway to the city. Its fourth corner is the Avenue of the Pines entrance to Saratoga Spa State Park, and the intersection borders SPAC, which can draw tens of thousands to some of its Live Nations concerts. Birge said 20 percent of the city's population, and 25 percent of its youth, live in the Geyser Crest section of the city, off Geyser Road. The intense development in Geyser Crest extends past the city into the town of Milton.

EDITORIAL: Don't count on 3am last call in Saratoga

Saratoga Public Safety Commissioner Chris Mathiesen has revived his proposal to move the last call at bars up an hour, from 4 to 3 a.m. We're prepared to believe this would help some, but it wouldn't solve the problem of drunken, boisterous, belligerent people pouring out of downtown's many bars late at night and the early morning, especially in summer. And the county Board of Supervisors seems no more inclined to approve the earlier hour, which would be necessary for it to happen, than when Mathiesen first proposed it in 2012. The Republican-dominated board sees a 3 a.m. closing as an infringement on business owners (who, as can be expected, oppose it because it would cost them revenue). But if that's the case, so is 4 a.m., the state's maximum closing time for bars. Why limit drinking hours at all? The reason is that you want people to go home at some point — before they are too blitzed to find it or to drive there safely. Most counties in the state have last calls before 4 a.m., some as early as 1 on weeknights and 2 on weekends. But the city's and county's closing times must match, the State Liquor Authority has ruled. That's why Saratoga Springs couldn't simply change its time on its own in 2012 after a number of well-publicized brawls, assaults and a fatal hit and-run, even though the City Council was in favor. The city of Glens Falls, with problems similar to Saratoga's, also faced a reluctant Board of Supervisors in Warren County, but eventually got it to go for a 3 a.m. countywide closing time last year (a compromise from the 2 a.m. first proposed by the mayor). And, according to Mathiesen, this has resulted in a big reduction in calls to the police late nights and weekends. But even if the Saratoga Board of Supervisors won't relent, there are other steps the city could take to improve things. Some it has already taken, such as requiring bar owners to hire trained bartenders and certified security personnel, and bouncers to wear clothes that identify them as employees. In addition, six bar owners along Caroline Street, where the problems are greatest, are voluntarily participating in a texting program with police that utilizes technology to alert others about problem drinkers. Such actions have helped, as Mathiesen acknowledges, and may be more important than an earlier last call. Saratoga wants to be thought of as the summer place to be, not to drink — at least to excess.